

Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

I CLAIM:

1.-13. (Cancelled)

14. (NEW) An e-mail system for exchanging messages among users of the system, the system comprising:

a sender agent for transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver, the sender agent having access to a listing of categories;

a receiver agent for receiving the message, the receiver agent recognizing the listing of categories;

wherein the sender agent and the receiver agent negotiate a category based on the listing of categories for associating the category with the message.

15. (NEW) The system of claim 14, wherein the negotiated category belongs to the listing of categories.

16. (NEW) The system of claim 14, wherein the negotiated category is mapped from one of the categories belonging to the listing of categories.

17. (NEW) The system of claim 14, wherein the negotiated category is a new category added to listing of categories.

18. (NEW) The system of claim 14, further comprising a storage module, the storage module storing the message according to the negotiated category.

19. (NEW) The system of claim 18, wherein the storage module indexes the message according to the negotiated category.

20. (NEW) The system of claim 14, further comprising an intermediary agent, wherein the listing of categories is provided to the sender agent through the intermediary agent.

21. (NEW) The system of claim 20, wherein the listing of categories is a union of a first listing provided by the intermediary agent and a second listing provided by the sender agent.
22. (NEW) The system of claim 20, further comprising a sender intermediary agent for communicating with said intermediary agent to negotiate said category.
23. (NEW) The system of claim 14, wherein said sender agent further includes a user interface for presenting the listing of categories to the sender to select the category therefrom.
24. (NEW) A system for classifying messages transmitted by a message exchange system, the message exchange system including a sending subsystem for transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver and a receiving subsystem for receiving the message, the system comprising:
 - a negotiation module for negotiating a category to be associated with the message and for maintaining a listing of categories;
 - said negotiation module including a sender agent for determining the category from the listing of categories and a receiver agent for providing the sender agent with the listing of categories.
25. (NEW) The system of claim 24, wherein said sender agent has access to a listing of sender categories and is operative to deduce the category from the listing of categories maintained by the negotiation module and the listing of sender categories.
26. (NEW) The system of claim 25, wherein the category is a common category belonging to the listing of sender categories and the listing of categories maintained by the negotiation module.
27. (NEW) The system of claim 25, wherein the category belongs to one of the two listings and is mapped to a second category belonging to the other of the two listings.
28. (NEW) The system of claim 25, wherein the category belongs to one of the two listings and is a new category added to the other of the two listings.
29. (NEW) The system of claim 24, wherein the message exchange system further includes a plurality of receiving subsystems for receiving the message for a plurality of receivers, said negotiation module further including a plurality of receiver agents, each of said plurality of receiver agents being operative to provide said sender agent with a corresponding listing of categories.

30. (NEW) The system of claim 29, wherein said negotiation module is configured to establish a common category for a subset of said plurality of receivers and to associate said common category with the message for said subset of receivers.
31. (NEW) The system of claim 24, wherein said negotiation includes the use of one or more intermediary agents, said one or more intermediary agents having access to at least a separate listing of additional categories, and wherein the category is determined from a union of said separate listing of additional categories and the listing of categories.
32. (NEW) The system of claim 31, wherein at least one of said one or more intermediary agents is selected by said receiver agent.
33. (NEW) The system of claim 31, said receiver agent further comprising a search module for searching for and selecting said one or more intermediary agents.
34. (NEW) The system of claim 31, wherein at least one of said one or more intermediary agents is selected by said sender agent.
35. (NEW) The system of claim 24, further comprising a user interface for presenting to a sender the listing of categories for the sender to select the category therefrom.
36. (NEW) The system of claim 35, said negotiation module is configurable through the user interface to either negotiate the category free of interactive input from the sender or to receive an indication of the category from the sender through the user interface.
37. (NEW) A method of managing messages transmitted by a message exchange system, the message exchange system including a sender agent for transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver and a receiver agent for receiving the message, comprising the steps of:
- obtaining a listing of categories;
 - providing the listing of categories to the sender agent;
 - determining a category to be associated with the message using the listing of categories;
 - and
 - associating the category with the message.
38. (NEW) The method of claim 37 wherein the step of determining the category includes selecting the category from the listing of categories.

39. (NEW) The method of claim 38 wherein the step of determining the category includes displaying the listing of categories for the sender to select.

40. (NEW) The method of claim 37 wherein the step of determining the category includes mapping a second category belonging to the listing of categories to the category.

41. (NEW) The method of claim 37 wherein the step of determining the category includes adding a new category to the listing of categories and mapping the new category to the category.

42. (NEW) The method of claim 37 further comprising the steps of:

identifying an intermediary, said intermediary having access to a second listing of a plurality of categories;

wherein the step of determining the category includes concurrent use of both the listing of categories and the second listing of the plurality of categories.

43. (NEW) The method of claim 37 wherein the step of obtaining the listing of categories includes:

obtaining a first listing of a first plurality of categories from a first intermediary,
retrieving a second listing of a second plurality of categories from a storage location maintained by said receiver agent,
producing the listing of categories from a union of the first listing and the second listing.

44. (NEW) The method of claim 37 further comprising:

storing the message together with an indication of the category associated therewith.

45. (NEW) The method of claim 44 further comprising:

segregating the message based on the indication of the category.

46. (NEW) The method of claim 44 further comprising:

indexing the message based on the indication of the category.

47. (NEW) A method of transmitting a message to a receiver for a sender in a message exchange system, the sender having a sender agent for sending the message and the receiver having a receiver agent for receiving the message, the sender agent having access to a listing of categories recognized by the receiver agent, the method comprising the steps of:

obtaining a destination address from the sender for identifying the receiver and the receiver agent;

receiving information from the sender to be included in the message;
negotiating a category with the receiver agent based on the information and the listing of categories;
associating the category with the message; and
transmitting the message to the receiver agent, the message being associated with the category.

48. (NEW) The method of claim 47 wherein the step of negotiating the category includes selecting the category from the listing of categories.

49. (NEW) The method of claim 47 wherein the step of negotiating the category includes mapping a second category belonging to the listing of categories to the category.

50. (NEW) The method of claim 47 wherein the step of negotiating the category includes adding a new category to the listing of categories and mapping the new category to the category.

51. (NEW) The method of claim 47, further comprising:
selecting an intermediary, the listing of categories being maintained by the intermediary;
and
obtaining the listing of categories from the intermediary.

52. (NEW) A computer readable medium containing computer program instructions for classifying messages sent over a communications network by a message exchange system, the message exchange system including a sender agent for transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver and a receiver agent for receiving the message, said computer readable medium containing instructions for:

providing a listing of categories to the sender agent;
negotiating a category to be associated with the message using the listing of categories;
and
associating the category with the message.

53. (NEW) The computer readable medium of claim 52, wherein the step of negotiating includes at least one of: selecting the category from the listing of categories, mapping a second category belonging to the listing of categories to the category, and creating and mapping a new category belonging to the listing of categories to the category.

54. (NEW) The computer readable medium of claim 52, containing further instructions for producing a user interface, and wherein the instructions for negotiating the category include displaying the list of categories to the sender for selection and receiving from the sender an identification of the category through the user interface.

55. (NEW) The computer readable medium of claim 52, wherein the instructions for associating the category with the message include inserting an indication of the category in a section of the message.

56. (NEW) The computer readable medium of claim 52, wherein the instructions for associating the category with the message include inserting an indication of the category in a header of the message.